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### Second lead site found in Old Bridge

Lawrence Harbor wall shows contamination

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BY ALLISON STEELE

Star-Ledger Staff

High levels of lead have been found in the soil in another area of Old Bridge, this time in a seawall along the Lawrence Harbor Beach.

It is the second property in the township to test positive this year for lead contamination. In April, tests performed on soil along nearby Margaret's Creek revealed similarly elevated levels. The contaminated areas have been closed off, and the state Department of Environmental Protection and the township have been conducting tests to determine the extent of the problem.

"We've been doing everything we can," said Township Administrator Michael Jacobs. "It's a concern, but it's something we're keeping a close eye on."

Long-term lead exposure can cause serious problems, including reproductive and nerve disorders in adults and permanent brain damage in children, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The contamination unearthed in April showed what township officials called "alarmingly high" levels of lead in the earth along Margaret's Creek. Lead levels were as high as 10 percent of the total soil composition in some spots, resulting from crushed battery casings left in the ground many years ago.

The state and township quickly moved to conduct water and air tests along that area, which Jacobs said have been encouraging. Air monitors have come back clear of lead dust in the air, and people have been asked to keep their motorcycles and ATVs away from the areas in question so as not to stir up anything.

"Right now it's staying where it is, which is the good news," Jacobs said.

The state is also in the process of conducting more testing, as well as contacting the company that is likely responsible for the lead. The township has paid for some testing thus far, but Jacobs hopes those costs can be reimbursed, and that the cleanup will be paid for by someone else.

In the meantime, township officials have been making sure everyone who lives near the contaminated sites is aware of the problem and stays away from the prohibited areas.

"We've been putting up signs, talking to neighbors, putting up fences," Jacobs said. "Whatever the state asks us to do, we do it right away."

Allison Steele may be reached at [asteale@starledger.com](mailto:asteale@starledger.com) or (732) 404-8083.

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